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## POLITICS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF CHARITY AND CORRECTION.

DURING the discussions conducted by the National Civil-Service Reform League, one important field has been greatly neglected—that indicated in the title of this article. It was natural and proper that the reform should aim to correct abuses in the postal department, in all branches of the general government, and in municipal administration; but the treatment of the helpless poor should not be forgotten. In 1896 the National Conference of Charities and Corrections discussed a report on the spoils system, and the writer presented another report in May, 1898.

The laws of the several states relating to such appointments and the tenure of office have been summarized in the *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY*, November, 1897, and January, 1898, by Mr. H. A. Millis. But are these laws properly administered, and how do they work? Schedules of questions were sent out to well-informed persons in all parts of the country, and many replies were received which throw interesting light on the subject.

The testimony before the committee seemed to justify certain conclusions which are briefly stated in their report. The "merit system" seems to be making progress in state institutions, especially those for the insane, for the deaf-mutes, and the blind. Less rapidly the better principles are accepted in state correctional institutions, as prisons and reformatories. It is in local institutions, such as city hospitals, jails, and in county charities, that we find the worst forms of neglect and incompetence, often of positive corruption.

Of course, partisan appointments are not often as bad as it is possible for them to be, owing to the presence of an enlightened public sentiment which makes it good policy even for partisans to appoint capable administrators. But the spoils system only too often works its natural and inevitable consequences, and the charitable purpose of the community is thwarted by dishonest or inefficient agents.

It is the purpose of this article to present, as far as possible in the very language of competent informants, some of the illustrations of the actual working of the spoils system in the designated field of inquiry.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Through the kindness of Mrs. Josephine Shaw Lowell, Mr. J. G. Thorp,

## EASTERN STATES.

A general view, based on long personal observation and experience, and on wide correspondence, is presented in this statement :

The general conclusions concerning New England are, I think, that there is very little serious attempt to make these positions the award of party service, largely because the New England states are and have been for so long a time under the control of one party ; and of course also, and perhaps chiefly, because the local public sentiment, generally speaking, will not suffer removals to get men in for party reasons. On the other hand, I think it pretty apparent that when appointments are to be made, they are almost universally made from the party which happens for the time being to be in control ; and if good men are appointed, as they generally are, such a result does not offend the public sentiment. Certainly nowhere in New England do we find wholesale removals on any change of party administration, but where vacancies occur after a change of party control, those vacancies are filled from the controlling party ; though in Massachusetts, while the above is practically the rule, in recent years we have had plenty of cases where not only members of the minority party have been reappointed, but new men belonging to that party have been put in to fill vacancies which have occurred. The public sentiment in this state will not permit the use of these offices for partisan purposes.

## CONNECTICUT.

More particular illustration may be found in a discriminating letter from Connecticut :

The requirement of non-political appointments to the board of direction of the state prison and to the boys' school has not been interpreted to mean appointment on merit alone, for it has, I think, been the invariable custom to give the party for the time being in the majority, *i. e.*, the party of the appointing power (the governor), the majority of the board.

The present warden of the state prison is a Democrat, though the board is Republican ; and his being left in is the more striking because he took the place of a Republican ousted under a Democratic administration. The idea of other than political fitness in appointment seems here to have scored a success ; and, indeed, it is my impression that the general drift is that way ; though such a thing as examination, or even formally requiring previous experience in the sort of work required, has not yet begun to dawn. . . .

Speaking of a certain board, this competent informant adds :

Appointments have been made to it in some instances for which the only obvious explanation was that the governor wanted to compliment somebody

Professor Frank A. Fetter, and others, we are permitted to use the materials here arranged. Some correspondents request that their names be withheld.

or to gratify some personal friend. I suppose that it is much the same everywhere—and will be to the end of the chapter. And, indeed, it is marvelous how well, on the whole, boards appointed in this fashion do their work—men chosen frequently who have never shown the slightest spark of interest, not to say special knowledge, in the kind of institutions they are called upon to manage. It is a compliment to the latent intelligence and conscientiousness of the average citizen, even if it does look a trifle hazardous. In the appointments of city charity commissioners there is a distinct tendency to ignore politics. How long it will last is a question.

In the election of town officers one correspondent says :

Politics enters into the choice of these officials in a good many cases, leading to frequent changes and consequent confusion in the administration.

Another letter from Connecticut says of the insane asylum of the state :

The appointment of trustees may have something of a political flavor, but that of the superintendent has been given for merit only, although no examination or competitive tests have been employed. The local sentiment in regard to this institution favors the appointment on grounds of professional fitness rather than by political favor . . . .

The office of county commissioner is a political one, and in some cases there may have been a political element in the appointment of superintendents, but as a rule, I should say, they were chosen on account of their general fitness for the position. No examination or competitive tests are held. Local sentiment in regard to the county homes (for dependent and neglected children) favors the appointment of officers for merit.

The office of selectman is a political one, and in some cases politics influences the appointment or removal of the superintendent of the almshouse, although in other cases superintendents who have shown themselves especially fitted for the position have been retained throughout a long term of years. I fear there is a considerable local sentiment in favor of considering the position of superintendent of the town almshouse as a political prize, although I do not think that this sentiment obtains largely among the best class of citizens.

In respect to the state prisons :

The board is largely filled by political appointments. Politics is doubtless an influence in the appointment of the warden, and no competitive examination is held for any of the positions. There is reason to believe that local sentiment is not averse to this political element, if the matter is not abused.

There is no competitive examination for positions in the state school for boys, and no evidence of local sentiment requiring it. The offices of sheriff and jailer are elective and political. It would be difficult to alter the system

in this state, although I think better results would be obtained if the county prisons were controlled by the state under a board of prison commissioners.

#### RHODE ISLAND.

There are thirty-eight cities and towns in Rhode Island. In the cities the office of overseer of the poor is distinct from any care of institutions; in the towns the overseer is generally superintendent of the poor-farm also. The present incumbents have held office from one year to twenty-four years; twenty-three having served more than three years. The longer terms are about equally divided between those elected by the people and those chosen by councils. The long term seems to mean the continuance of one party in control and that the party to which the overseer belongs. Fifteen overseers had retained their office after a change in political administration and thirteen had not. The office is not much sought in country places.

#### NEW HAMPSHIRE.

The correspondent from New Hampshire speaks of the changes in county officers, superintendents of poor farms, and others whose "retention in the employ of the county institution depends upon their political influence with the county commissioners." In respect to the state board of charities he incidentally reveals a weak point in the system of appointments: "The board has been continually changing in its make-up, so that at this day we are just beginning to get 'the hang of the schoolhouse,' and hope soon to accomplish the end for which the board was created."

#### MASSACHUSETTS.

Our correspondent believes that political (partisan) considerations do not affect the appointments in the case of superintendents of hospitals for the insane and their subordinates; that city and town relief officers and superintendents of almshouses are selected for fitness; that wardens of the state penitentiary have sometimes been chosen on partisan grounds, but that the present incumbent is retained because he is satisfactory; that the reformatories for men, women, and youth are relatively free from partisan influence, and their superintendents, chaplains, and physicians are chosen on the ground of merit. Subordinate officers in the penitentiary and men's reformatory are under civil-service rules. Political interference seems to have touched the management of the houses of correction in Suffolk county, but the direct masters are retained through political changes. The trustees

of Boston institutions for children and for the insane seem to be free from partisan interference. Political influences do not prevail in state institutions for delinquent children. County jails and sheriffs are somewhat affected by political considerations. The police and lock-ups in cities are protected by civil-service rules.

NEW YORK.

The information collected by Mrs. Josephine Shaw Lowell comes from superintendents of institutions, managers, superintendents of the poor, and from other persons in a favorable position to know the facts. The mode of working under the civil-service rules is of interest.

*State institutions.*—The answers from half the superintendents of state institutions heard from state that appointments and removals are made under the civil-service law and rules, and that political and personal favor is not considered. Extracts from less general replies reveal something of the old leaven working beneath the surface. "A" says:

I do not think that there is any "spoils system" in our school at the present time. Whatever may have been the custom in the past, I feel that our present board of management has an earnest desire to promote the best interests of the school. Of course, there may be a case now and then where some pressure may be exerted in behalf of a personal friend seeking appointment, or something of that kind, but it is never pushed to extremity; and the civil service and the views of the superintendent rule in the matter. Local sentiment in this community, as in all communities, doubtless is apt to be selfish and to consider its own interests first. This must be taken, as we take human nature, I suppose, with some amount of allowance. I feel that we have no special reason here for complaint.

"B":

I think, if the selection of men and women to fill public offices were based upon *fitness* and *ability* alone, every department would be better served.

The board of directors of this institution having changed in its political character has made some little difference in the positions filled. I can see, however, no detriment in these new appointments, and in many cases they are distinct improvements over the officers occupying positions under the old régime.

The sentiment throughout the county in regard to this institution is that it has been, since its inception, distinctly Democratic in its officers and management. This is not untrue to fact.

"C":

I believe in civil service in institutions of this character. I must decline to express my views on the subject at length, as, in all probability, I shall

shortly be a victim to the spoils system, as you term it, and, consequently, it would be indelicate for me to protest against it at this time, for fear of being charged with selfish motives.

“D”:

First, under the laws of the state of New York, the managers of state hospitals appoint the treasurer from an unclassified list, and he can only be removed by the managers after charges have been filed in writing and an opportunity to be heard is given. The managers also appoint the superintendent from the merit list, as submitted by the State Civil-Service Commission. Formerly they were compelled by the law to select from the first three names of the eligible list certified by the commission, but under the present civil-service law they hold a fitness examination of all those who are on the eligible merit list and select the one whose combined standing for merit and fitness is highest. The superintendent, like the treasurer, can only be removed by the managers upon charges preferred in writing, and an opportunity to be heard being granted.

Second, all other appointments in state hospitals are made by the superintendent, certain positions being in the classified list of the civil service, while others are exempted.

First assistant physicians, second assistant physicians, assistant physicians, junior assistant physicians, and internes all have to undergo a competitive examination for merit, which is conducted by the State Civil-Service Commission. In addition, the same regulation in regard to an examination for fitness prevails as in the case of the superintendent, with the exception that the superintendent appoints, instead of the board of managers.

I might say here that the civil-service regulations provide certain qualifications for these positions as well as that of the superintendent. The superintendent must be at least thirty years of age, and have had not less than five years' experience in the care and treatment of the insane. First assistant physicians must have had three years' experience in the care and treatment of the insane and must be at least twenty-five years of age. Second assistant physicians are promoted without examination from either the list of assistant or junior assistant physicians. Assistant and junior assistant physicians must take a competitive examination, and must have had an experience of at least one year in hospital work. Internes pass an examination without having had any previous hospital or other experience. Their salaries are lower than the junior assistant physicians', and the intent is that they should be drilled in hospital work and thus become trained for the higher places.

Stewards are appointed by the superintendent from an unclassified list, and can only be removed by the superintendent upon charges preferred in writing and an opportunity to be heard being granted. This same regulation applies to the various positions in the medical service.

Skilled mechanics (positions paying more than \$720 a year), clerical

positions, and a few others are governed by the same general civil-service regulations as obtain in the positions mentioned above, but those who occupy them can be removed at any time by the superintendent when in his opinion their services are not satisfactory.

The other positions in the service are non-competitive, but the applicants have to take a civil-service examination to test their qualifications for the work; this examination being conducted by the local civil-service board, appointed by the State Civil-Service Commission and selected from the list of officers of the institution. This local board submits at stated intervals a report showing the appointments, resignations, discharges, and promotions. In the case of original appointments, the examination papers are forwarded to the State Civil-Service Commission for inspection and filing.

In an experience of many years in public hospitals for the insane, party politics have not controlled; in fact, so far as my personal knowledge goes, applicants are not appointed with regard to their political or religious belief, but simply and solely for fitness.

“E” has a less optimistic outlook:

At present party service solely governs the appointment of men in all the grades, with a strong tendency toward making the appointment of women a personal favor to political friends. In the subordinate places: firemen, engineers, gardeners, watchmen, etc., etc., when the place is wanted the incumbent goes, regardless of civil-service certificate. Local sentiment is summed up on the one hand in the old war cry, “To the victors belong the spoils,” modified by the “Thief! Thief!” of the vanquished. Even our bread and butter carries the taint of politics, especially the egg part of it. The steward is beset by dealers in every kind of commodity, and all with a backing not to be despised, if his goods are.

“F”:

It was the design of the framers of our prison law to take the prisons out of politics, as is evidenced by chap. 382, Laws of 1889, sec. 30, which says that the superintendent of prisons shall appoint certain officers, “and he may remove them from office when in his judgment the public interests shall so require.” Also subdivision 3 of the same section says: “No appointments shall be made in any of the state prisons of this state on the grounds of political partisanship, but honesty, capacity, and adaptation shall constitute the rule for appointment, and any violation of this rule shall be sufficient cause for the removal from office of the officer committing such violation.”

There is scarcely a state in the union which permits politics to interfere with its prison management, and up to the present time New York state has not attempted to run its prisons as a part of any political machine. As instance of the truth of this, Warden Brush was appointed at Sing Sing by the first superintendent of prisons, Louis D. Pillsbury, and served successively



under Superintendent I. V. Baker and Superintendent Austin Lathrop, until he was forced, by ill health, to resign and shortly afterward died.

Isaiah Fuller was appointed at Clinton by Superintendent Pillsbury, and served during Mr. Baker's term and five years under Superintendent Lathrop, when he was removed as a result of an investigation on charges of cruelty toward prisoners.

There are officers today in the prisons of this state that have served thirty years, and during my connection with the prisons there have never been any removals on account of politics or partisanship.

Very few men are adapted to prison work, and every change of prison officials has a detrimental effect on prison discipline. The changes in prison work entailed by the constitution which went into effect one year ago makes changes in prison management at the present time a very hazardous experiment, as the prisons were never in such a critical condition as at the present time. Established industries, which were all wiped out by the new constitution, are being replaced by other industries, and this change would seem to require persons with prison experience.

The following are the only interesting statements from managers of institutions :

“AB”:

I resigned because it was evident to me that the spirit of the civil-service law (if not the letter of the law) was seriously violated.

The removal of the steward was the most flagrant act of injustice. One of the board of trustees was quite frank in saying to me that he wanted the spoils and did not wish to conceal his desire.

“CD”:

Inasmuch as I am a manager of the state hospital, I think it would be indelicate in me to furnish the information you seek in your communication of the twenty-fourth instant. Therefore I hope you will excuse me in declining to do so.

Mrs. Lowell's judgment is :

It would seem to be the fact, judging from most of the replies received, that usually the state institutions of New York (by which is meant the institutions supported by state appropriations and managed by local, unpaid boards appointed by the governor) have been free to a great degree, and many of them entirely, from political influence, but that it has existed in some few of these institutions in the past, and that it is a growing evil.

In considering the references to the civil-service law in the replies received, it is also necessary to remember the following facts :

1. That under the present civil-service law of the state of New York (“the Black Law”) there is no position which is not in reality

removed from the test of competitive examination, for the appointing power can choose, and is intended by the law to choose, any person who has been able to get upon an eligible list, even at the very bottom. In a report of the Civil-Service Reform Association, published March 21, it is shown that, in one case at least, a man standing 200th on the merit eligible list of the State Civil-Service Board was appointed to an office. The governor of New York, in preparing the law which bears his name, intended to give to the appointing power liberty of selection, and he has accomplished his purpose.

2. That the stewards of the state hospitals, asylums, and houses of refuge were in 1897 removed by the State Civil-Service Board, necessarily with the governor's approval, from Class II, in which competitive examinations are required, to Class I, in which no examinations are required. As the stewards of the state institutions are the persons who have the control of the purchase of supplies and who, therefore, are the most liable to be assailed by improper local influences, placing this office entirely at the mercy of personal and political pressure is an ominous step, and one which bodes ill for the comfort of the inmates of state institutions and for the economy of state funds.

In this connection the following extract from the letter of a disinterested citizen in regard to one important state institution probably points to a greater evil than is suggested even, for if one institution is so threatened, it is probable that all are alike exposed to it:

The largest charitable institution in our neighborhood, the asylum for the insane, has never been run on the spoils system, and has always been successfully managed. Now, however, an attempt is being made to turn the asylum into a political machine, and the friends of the institution view the threatened change with alarm.

The following extract from the letter of a state commissioner is disheartening, for it is undoubtedly true:

It is my experience that well-meaning men, who are in favor of the merit system in the abstract, are perverted when they become public officials, and are easily persuaded in their own minds that they know personally someone who could better fill any position under them than anyone else in the state.

*City and county institutions.*—In respect to local institutions Mrs. Lowell writes:

The replies in regard to city and county institutions have been extremely meager. The nine replies received from superintendents of the poor contain but little that bears upon the subject of the inquiry, and although a special inquiry as to poorhouses, jails, and penitentiaries was addressed to the secre-

taries of the thirty-seven civil-service boards of the cities of the state, the only information received was the following reply from an inland city :

"Our local city and state institutions are well under the control of the civil-service system, but in our county institutions it is ignored entirely."

The only replies from the superintendents themselves which are to the point are the following :

From a superintendent of the poor :

Appointments in the poor office, and the almshouse, are made by the superintendent of the poor, solely, and are invariably on the ground of fitness for the work required, and politics has nothing whatever to do with it.

As a matter of curiosity, the undersigned made an investigation, and found that there were about as many employés in the almshouse of the opposite political party as of the party to which he belonged. I do not inquire as to an applicant's politics, only as to his experience.

In the city poor office all the employés are of the dominant political party. The Civil-Service Commission here never included the city poor office in its examinations, until two years ago. At that time all the incumbents were obliged to take the examination, and, being thoroughly familiar with all the duties of the place, of course they stood highest. Since that time there have been no changes in the department.

The appointments are made by a committee of the common council. At the last general election there was a complete reversal of parties in power, here, and it is a matter of considerable speculation what the Democratic party will be able to do, in the matter of rating their friends high enough on "fitness" to land them, to the exclusion of Republicans.

I think party leaders would think that employés should be of the dominant political party; however, they do not try to influence the subscriber to make an appointment solely on political grounds.

From a city commissioner :

In the hospital the superintendent appoints all nurses, attendants, and orderlies, fixes their salaries and prescribes their duties, subject to my approval; likewise all promotions and removals are made by him. All appointments are determined by fitness. Inasmuch as civil-service rules apply, appointments are made accordingly, everything else being equal, and where civil-service rules do not conflict, party service and personal favor have their influence here as elsewhere.

Many facts are cited from a report of the New York County Visiting Committee, October, 1897, from which it is evident that the "spoils system," during the years 1896 and 1897 at least, was responsible in the Department of Charities of New York city for cruelty of various kinds to helpless babies and to the aged sick, causing much suffering and in many cases death.

That this state of things existed under an administration which in some other departments was really a "reform administration" makes the facts even more disgraceful than they otherwise would be.

The following is an extract from a letter, dated March, 1898, from an ex-official (a Republican) of New York city, turned out of office by the present administration :

The customs governing appointments and removal of officials are for the most part, or at least at present, strictly partisan in character. The district leaders of Tammany Hall have promised positions to so many and the pressure is so great that it is proposed to wipe out the entire eligible list in the civil service and at once have examinations, which will relieve the pressure by making appointments as fast as they can be classified. It is proposed to take every position of importance off the classified service, leaving only clerkships and other minor positions. It is also proposed that if the new regulations had to be submitted to the State Civil-Service Board, the leaders of Tammany Hall would be compelled to confer with Senator Platt, who is supposed to control the state board, to arrange that by their approving the new rules a division of the offices would be made in the proportion of 70 per cent. to the Democrats and 30 per cent. for the Republicans. The Democrats propose to discharge every man who was appointed during the "Strong" administration.

The local sentiment on the subject of appointments and removals by citizens generally is that the law in all cases should be observed, where now it is violated or evaded every day.

Among political leaders the civil-service law is looked upon as a good thing to stop pressure for place, as all the leaders have to do to get rid of a persistent office seeker is to tell him he can do nothing for him until he gets on the "list," and then, if he has the right "pull," he will be appointed.

The following extract from a letter of an ex-civil-service commissioner of New York city confirms the previous testimony as to the administration of 1895-6 and 1897 in the Department of Charities of that city :

. . . . The Civil-Service Commission kept close watch to prevent evasions of the rules, but on more than one occasion was estopped by the asseverations of the charities department. Although the Civil-Service Commission, with the evidence before it, had every reason to doubt the statements of the department, and no reason to change its opinion because of them, it can be understood that the position was a delicate one. My opinion is that the Board of Charities, under the presidency of Mr. —, was most inefficiently administered, and that the reason for said inefficiency was the political activity of Mr. — and his continuous effort to appoint for political reasons alone. . . . I have had evidence that even the better-paid employés, who

could only be taken from an eligible list, were induced to join political associations and become more or less active political workers, under threat, I suppose, of removal. . . .

*County jails and penitentiaries.*—Mrs. Lowell writes :

In regard to the jails of the state I have received no response to my inquiries, but it is well known that they are generally in a deplorable condition, owing to the fact that the sheriffs, who have charge of them, are elected as members of one or other of the political parties, and that they have no salaries, but make their money out of the board of the prisoners.

Attempts have been made from time to time to change the system and place the jails under the charge of salaried keepers, but in vain. The sheriffs have a single term of three years, and are, of course, nominated without regard to their qualifications for managing a prison.

I have been equally unfortunate in obtaining information in regard to the county penitentiaries.

The failure to show an interest in this important subject on the part of officials and members of reform organizations of all kinds has been very discouraging, and has convinced me that the people of the state of New York are far from understanding the tremendous evils that grow out of politics in public institutions.

From the manager of a state insane hospital, May 3, 1898 :

The party machines, both Democratic and Republican, in the counties of the state are, I am assured, as corrupt and as fully charged with the purposes of rule or ruin as were ever the corresponding machines in New York city. The demagogues in the rural districts are very apt and ready scholars, and quickly fall in line with the plans and methods of the political bosses in your city. There is the same method of packing conventions with delegates chosen by a self-styled caucus of three or four men seated at a table in a drinking saloon ; the same sort of control is exercised over the organization by the district or county chairman, who appoints the temporary chairman, who appoints the committee on credentials, who names the members of the convention, regardless of any regularity or irregularity in the choice made by their constituents. So that the county or district boss controls the organization of the party, and thus attains despotic power in the councils thereof.

He describes an attempt to place certain hospitals in the hands of incompetent and subservient managers :

With four Republicans and three Democrats in the board, the Republican machine thought they had control, and laid down and openly announced their programme. The treasurer was to be forced to resign, and in his place was to be put a man who would by intimidation bulldoze about one hundred employes

at the hospital into voting the Republican ticket. The superintendent of the hospital, by arts familiar to political "heelers," was to be browbeaten, nagged, and worried and insulted until his sense of self-respect should compel him to resign; with him would also go the steward, his appointee. The board would then put in as superintendent a country doctor, already selected, who had no more qualifications for the position than any other crossroads doctor; he would be merely a manikin; he would appoint a steward, also already selected, who would make purchases in those mysterious ways unknown to outsiders, but perfectly familiar to political thieves of every grade; and *commissions*, small but frequently recurring, would be the order of the day. "Tips" would be privately conveyed to dealers in groceries, provisions, clothing, etc., and those too honest to take such hints would find very soon that their goods were not wanted at any price. Now, all this I find to have been the subject of conversation among those quiet men, silent listeners, but quick to learn, who in every party are always keeping themselves well informed of the "true inwardness" of affairs.

Of course, such things could never be established by any evidence admissible only in a court at law, but it is none the less tangible and well founded.

The local sentiment regarding all this sort of proceeding is, with the better part of the community, wholly opposed to it at every stage, for these machine men obtain their most numerous supporters among the corrupt classes, the vicious and saloon element, and all others of the degraded sort, with no conscience and no sense of responsibility as citizens. The Republicans in — county, for instance, are in revolt against their machine, and its power is likely to be overthrown in the next campaign. I need not say, for you will readily infer it as true, that the county bosses are always in close affiliation and in cordial coöperation with the two head bosses in New York, Croker and Platt. . . .

From a private individual, May 2, 1898:

. . . . . The almshouse is the only institution that I have any positive knowledge of. All I can say of this institution is that each keeper, on entering office, removes such of the attendants and superintendents of departments as he may wish to, and gives the places to relatives and friends. Further than this I am unable to make a statement. I suppose this is one of the desirable attainments of this office. As to whether these removals and new appointments are detrimental to county interests, I cannot say. One keeper who, a few years ago, was in office as superintendent, had his wife as matron (which was quite proper), two sons had good-paying positions, daughter was superintendent of sewing department, son-in-law house physician, other relatives having good-paying positions. When time came for reëlection, a superintendent of road work was boarded, with a number of his assistants, at the expense of the county (the object, to secure political

influence, as all the men, amounting, perhaps, to several hundred, were voters). . . .

From the secretary of a local civil-service reform association, April 30, 1898:

. . . . The county offices are not even yet under the civil-service laws, and I could get no clear information. I knew at the outset, however, in a general way, what has since been confirmed by the managing editors, city editors, and some of the reporters of several of the papers here, that in both the jail and penitentiary the administration is bad, and the offices are given through favoritism and not for fitness. I was told at more than one newspaper office that in both these places there is some abuse to write up every few months, and that the management is wasteful, inefficient, and incompetent. I could not get details from them. About two years ago there was a rather elaborate writing up of the penitentiary. . . .

From an ex-civil-service commissioner of New York city, April 30, 1898:

. . . . One of the most plausible sources of evasion of the requirements of the civil-service statute is the change in classification of the different positions. This has not only been used as a means of transferring persons to the exempt schedule, so that no examination whatever should be required upon their admission to the public service, but offices have sometimes been created for the purpose of compelling the creation of a new eligible list, and the consequent filing of new applications, under circumstances when very few persons would know of the intended examination. The Civil-Service Commission undertook to guard against this method of evasion by establishing the practice that a mere change of name of a position should not be considered as a change of classification, and that, if an eligible list existed for a given position, it should be used for all similar positions. This was a fruitful source of controversy with the departments, but we adhered to it rigidly, and with very good results.

In short, my experience as civil-service commissioner convinced me that the true conception of a civil-service office has not yet found a home in the minds of most public officials. This conception is that the true function of the office is to do for the heads of departments what in a small office, and with ample leisure, they might do for themselves, but what, under existing conditions, it is impracticable for them to do properly, that is to say, to absolutely undertake to furnish them with the most competent persons for any particular employment. I am convinced that where the examiners are competent, and where they have proper information in regard to the duties of the office, they can determine the fitness of candidates to the best advantage, and that by experience they come to be better qualified to do this than most public officials. I do not say this because I think they are by nature any wiser

or better than other people, but because they make a specialty of examinations, and, if intelligent, learn by experience the fittest method of examination.

I often hear the argument from educated and intelligent people that the civil-service system is an evil. They admit it to be a necessary one to prevent greater abuses, but they think that the system of examinations is scholastic, and ill-adapted to attain the objects of the statute. In this I am convinced they are mistaken. I do not mean to say that civil-service examinations have always been of the most appropriate character. There has been a great deal learned in the administration of the system. Undoubtedly in December last it was much better administered in the city of New York than it was when the system was first introduced. I believe the same to be true of the administration of the federal service. I do, however, recognize the danger that examiners will fall into ruts, and that heads of departments will fail to give them the proper information as to the duties of the office for which a complete examination is to be had. It is to avoid these evils that the interest and coöperation of all intelligent students of social science are of the greatest value. . . .

#### CENTRAL STATES.

##### MICHIGAN.

Michigan may be taken as an example of states where, in a very high degree, worthy traditions have strong influence on appointments. The prisons are managed by boards appointed by the governor, with the consent of the senate. Both political parties must be represented in these boards. These boards appoint wardens and have power to remove for cause, after an opportunity of hearing upon written charges. Subordinates are appointed by the wardens, subject to approval of the boards.

In the hospitals for the insane the boards appoint the superintendents, and they appoint their subordinates.

It is claimed in all the state institutions that promotions are "based on merit." Nothing like a civil-service examination is required, except in the case of attendants, where graduation from the training school is requisite for future promotions. Of course a "merit system" without initial free competitive examination is not the genuine article. The jails and other local institutions are largely under control of party leaders, but the visitations of the agents of the state board and public opinion mitigate the evils of this system. Complaints in relation to the jails, the police courts, and the sheriffs are very frequent, and the evils are charged to "politics."



## OHIO.

An administrative officer of a state institution writes :

There are no rules governing promotions, but it has been the aim of the present management to advance in position those whose services have been highly satisfactory in lower positions, when opportunity offers. Teachers, matrons, and attendants are selected from a list of applicants without regard to party affiliations. But I can easily see how a board of trustees can be so constituted as to make these intentions of a superintendent, who is responsible for an institution, null and void, and I can also easily understand how the service in an institution could be greatly impaired by an organization made up independent of the wishes of the superintendent. No examinations or tests have ever been held as a basis of selecting persons to serve in the institution. . . . It is my opinion that the theory of party leaders and societies is to the effect that the institution should be managed independent of party politics, . . . but when a party is once in power, the pressure for place becomes so great that this theory is often thwarted and the practical spoils system instituted in its place.

The following letter from an experienced superintendent of a county infirmary throws strong light on the forces at work :

The laws of Ohio relating to infirmaries provide for the election of three directors, one being elected each year, and each serving a term of three years. These directors have charge of the county infirmary, and, in certain cases, dispense relief to persons outside of the infirmary. They also appoint a superintendent of the infirmary.

Their authority in these matters is absolute, and unconditional ; they are responsible to no one, and not subject to censure or removal, public opinion and their own sense of duty being the only restraining influence over them. They adopt no rules of administration.

Custom grants to each infirmary director at least one reelection, provided he has not done something to incur the displeasure of the public.

No one at all conversant with American politics need be told that, under these circumstances, the party having a majority controls the election of infirmary directors, that party fealty is the first condition of success, and that their official acts must be in conformity with the wishes of their party. In granting relief to the poor, however, party lines are entirely ignored, the poor are all treated alike, regardless of their party affiliations. So far as I know, the infirmary directors never inquire, nor do they know, what the party preferences of those who receive relief at their hands are. It is only in dispensing the patronage of the infirmary, which includes purchasing supplies therefor, that favoritism appears, and it is not party favoritism so much as the personal favor of the directors that is manifested.

The management of the infirmary is mainly through a superintendent

who, by a well-established custom, is appointed for one year only; if his administration is satisfactory to the directors, he is reappointed each year. The superintendent's duties are defined by law as follows: "He shall perform such duties as they (the directors) impose upon him, be governed in all respects by their rules and regulations, and may be removed by them at pleasure." With this law the reason for the custom of appointing a superintendent for one year only is plain; it places the superintendent completely and absolutely under the control of the directors; if the personnel of the board is changed, he can be removed; their wishes and pleasure are the rules of his action, whether it be in appointing his subordinates, purchasing the supplies, or managing the infirmary. The good-will of the directors is the one essential condition necessary to the success of a superintendent; without this good-will neither party service, personal merit, nor fitness for the place avails a superintendent anything. Through this control the directors or any one of them can wield all the influence and patronage of the infirmary in his own behalf, and keep himself in the background; if anything be wrong, the superintendent is censured; the director reaps the benefit.

It is this fact, and not party discipline or party fealty, which impels a superintendent to take an active part in party politics, and use the influence and patronage at his disposal to further the interests of his party's candidate for infirmary director, that prompts him to seek influence in the party councils, so that the right man (to him) is nominated. These are facts, indisputable facts. It does not necessarily follow, however, that because of these facts either infirmary directors or superintendents are mercenary, or corrupt; as a rule they are all honorable and upright men, who do their duty conscientiously. They are politicians from necessity and not from choice. The conditions surrounding them require them to be active in politics, so as to maintain their position and influence.

Local sentiment in this county is very strongly in favor of this state of affairs. Recently an influential party leader was appointed a director of the workhouse; in this capacity he voted for a member of the opposite party for superintendent. He was promptly denounced as a traitor to his party; his motives were impugned; his removal was demanded from all parts of the county; the central committee of his party passed strong resolutions to that effect; his influence is gone, for the time being at least; petitions are now being circulated and extensively signed to have his office legislated out of existence, and not a single voice is raised in his behalf, not even among the opposing parties.

While public opinion here concedes partisan influence in the control of penal and charitable institutions, it does not tolerate extravagant, corrupt, or dishonest management thereof. The party in control is held responsible as strictly as the officers. Corrupt or dishonest practices on the part of an officer will, in this county, insure the defeat of his party as surely as it will insure his own defeat.

## INDIANA.

Professor Frank A. Fetter gives a summary of the course of legislation governing administration :

Almost every possible method of appointment of boards of trustees and directors seems to have been tried. It is probable, almost certain, that political management was the unquestioned rule from the beginning until little more than a decade ago. We surmise, therefore, that many of the changes of directing boards were caused by the desire to get the control of the patronage away from the other party. But the power would be again vested in the governor when he was politically in accord with the legislature.

The first board of managers of the state prison was elected by the legislature in 1821. In 1824, however, the governor was given the power to appoint or select the managing officers of the prison, there being no board of control ; this policy continuing for eighteen years. From 1842 to 1855 the warden or superintendent was elected on joint ballot of general assembly. From 1855 to 1893 the board of directors appears to have been elected by joint ballot of the general assembly, and it appointed the superintendent and determined the political complexion of the staff. In 1893 the appointment of this board was vested in the governor. In 1895 a special election board, consisting of the leading state officers, was given the power of selecting the board. In 1897 the appointment of the managers of the new reformatory (old prison south) and of the state prison (old prison north) was given to the governor, and it was made the duty of these boards to manage the prisons without regard to politics. The former board is now equally divided as to political views ; the latter is all of the party of the governor.

The woman's prison has never been politically managed. An effort was made to drag it into politics in the early days, we are informed, but this was unsuccessful. Since 1877 it has been managed entirely by women, and it is their pride that efficiency and character are the only tests for service there.

In the institutions for the blind, deaf, and insane, respectively, it was successively provided between 1844 and 1853 that trustees should be annually elected by the legislature by ballot, appointed by the governor alone, by the governor with the consent of the senate, by the legislature first, but vacancies as they occur to be filled by the governor, and finally by a *viva voce* vote of the legislature. It is impossible without further evidence to detect any reason or regularity in these changes. In 1853 trustees of the three institutions were made elective by joint ballot of the general assembly. The number of the members of the board changed, but the method of selection remained the same for twenty-six years. In 1879 the appointing power was given to the governor, the consent of the senate being necessary. The two branches of government were then politically in accord. In 1883 the appointing power was reclaimed by the assembly, the bill being passed over the veto of the

governor, who was of opposite politics. He emphasizes in his veto the hindrance to efficient work by the legislature that was caused by the selection of these boards and the fostering of partisan spirit ; but makes no mention of its effect on the administration of the institutions. Under this law a part of the directors went out of office each two years, and succeeding legislatures being Republican, a goodly proportion, perhaps all, of the members were Republicans by 1889. The newly elected Democratic legislature then, desiring to make a clean sweep, held a party caucus, nominated candidates, repealed the old law, and enacted another, almost the same, over the veto of the governor, who was of opposite politics.

In 1893, after ten years of legislative election, the governor was again given the appointing power, both executive and legislative branches being Democratic. The greatest of all forward steps was taken in 1895, the legislature being Republican and the governor a Democrat, when non-political management was enjoined on the boards of these institutions by the law, and it was further provided that not more than nine of the total of eighteen members composing the six boards should be of one political party. In 1897 a slight backward step was taken by the victorious Republicans in permitting as many as twelve of the eighteen to be of one party. A much more radical change by political leaders was only prevented by a most earnest protest from all the friends of non-partisan management throughout the state.

The School for Feeble-Minded Children, the Soldiers' Orphans' Home, were at the first under non-partisan control, both being under one board. As with the other state institutions, their trustees were elected in 1883 by the legislature. In 1885 this was changed, and politics have since not been in the boards. The Reform School for Boys has from the beginning been managed in a non-partisan manner.

Rules of administration adopted by boards of directors. Extracts from regulations for the Northern Indiana Hospital for Insane, at Longcliff, near Logansport.

*Non-partisan employment.*

The board shall not consider political belief in the employment or dismissal of the superintendent, nor in the confirmation or non-confirmation of the employment of others by the superintendent. In the engagement of all officers and employes only merit, fitness, and character shall be considered. (See Acts 1895, p. 302, sec. 7.)

*Selection of officers and employes.*

It shall be the duty of the medical superintendent to select and employ any such assistant physicians, clerks, attendants, skilled workers, and servants as may be, in his judgment, necessary to enable him to properly perform the work with which he is charged, subject to the confirmation of the board. A refusal of confirmation, however, on the part of the board of any

such selection shall constitute a vacancy, and thereupon the superintendent shall make other selections until such consent be secured.

An officer of the Southern Hospital for the Insane, at Evansville, states :

No formal rules adopted by the board of trustees in regard to appointments, except that no more than one member of a family may have employment in the institution at the same time. This is an excellent aid to discipline.

The Institution for the Education of the Deaf has, by its board of trustees, adopted a very complete set of rules, an extract from which is as follows :

*The appointing power.*

The superintendent shall be the executive head of the institution, and the organ of communication with subordinate departments. Into his hands is committed the management of the institution in all its departments; and the subordinate officers, teachers, and employes are to adhere to the plans of operation which he may mark out, and promptly and cheerfully comply with all his directions, not only in the performance of the duties as may be by him specified in "rules of the superintendent," but also in such others as it may be deemed just and proper to assign them.

By statutory enactment he has powers concerning operatives, as follows : (1) He shall appoint all officers, teachers, secretaries, assistants, physicians, attendants, and employes as may be necessary, but the board of trustees shall prescribe the number thereof, confirm or reject the appointments, and fix the amount of compensation. (2) He shall take personal charge and supervision of the institution and of the pupils thereof, and have the direction of all persons connected therewith, subject to the order and control of said board. (3) He may, for good cause, discharge any of said persons and appoint other competent persons in their places. He shall report such changes, and the causes therefor, to the said board at the next meeting thereof; and also the appointments made, because of such changes, for confirmation or rejection. If rejected, he shall make other suitable appointments.

He shall frequently inspect all parts of the establishment, and take the most efficient, or even stringent, measures for enforcing neatness, order, and regularity in all departments. And it shall be his duty to discharge immediately any person employed who shall appear inefficient, neglect allotted duties, or manifest a spirit of insubordination.

The following reply was received from the School for Feeble-minded Youth, at Fort Wayne :

There have been no rules adopted. The law is so plain and straightforward.

ward that it is not susceptible of misunderstanding. It has been lived up to in letter and spirit. The theory upon which the trustees act is that the superintendent shall be held to the strictest account, not only for his own behavior and successful work, but for the character, fitness, and success of every subordinate. Hence, they have nothing whatever to do with appointments or removals.

In the Indiana Reform School for Boys, at Plainfield, "all rules are made by the superintendent and approved by the board of control, leaving these matters entirely with the superintendent."

*Customs governing appointments, etc.*—The president of the Indiana Reform School for Girls and Woman's Prison, Mrs. Claire A. Walker, writes :

During the fifteen years that I have been connected with this institution, appointments, removals, and promotions of officers and employes have always been made irrespective of politics. Perhaps this is largely due to the fact that, as women, we have no politics. That factor has never entered into the management of the institution, and no doubt this has been greatly to the benefit of the institution.

It is to be noted that for twenty years the board of managers has been composed of women, and that every person connected with the institution, excepting the engineer, has been a woman.

The blank form of application used by the Southern Indiana Hospital for Insane contains the question : "What is your politics ?" An officer explains to us that this "is asked merely that we may keep the appointments equally divided between the parties." This would appear, therefore, to be rather a *bipartisan* than a *non-partisan* method of appointment, such as is contemplated in the law which says that only qualification, merit, and fitness shall be considered, and political beliefs or affiliations shall not be taken account of. At any rate, this is the view of another superintendent, Dr. S. E. Smith, of the Eastern Hospital, who, writing of his own institution, says :

A bipartisan management, applying other than to the organization of the board, is only one step in advance of the partisan plan. No recognition of political faith should be made by the appointing power, and the superintendent should never know the poll of his institution. It is my custom to furnish the leading political parties with the names of the legal voters and give them opportunities to make a poll of the voters on the condition that under no circumstances must the result be revealed to me, directly or indirectly.

The blank used by the Institution for the Education of the Deaf

for applications contains a long list of questions, but no reference whatever to political affiliations.

The reply to this question by Alexander Johnson, superintendent of the School for Feeble-Minded Youth, is as follows :

The custom governing appointments has been to consider solely personal merit and fitness for the place. The judge of this merit and fitness has been the superintendent. Having complete authority gives him so deep a sense of responsibility that it is extremely unlikely any consideration but the good of the state, as represented by the best possible conduct of the institution, should govern him.

While fully believing in the method of competitive examination, wherever possible, so far this has not seemed practicable in this institution. In the peculiar work which we have to do, the personal equation is of so much value that it seems difficult to devise a theory of examination which would result in giving us the help we need. Practically, we employ our help in extremely subordinate positions to begin with, and promote those who prove themselves fit in the most severe of competitive examinations, namely, that of a close oversight of their daily work and conduct.

In the Reform School for Boys "merit alone is the basis of appointment to positions, and merit alone as to the tenure of such employment."

The practice in these matters at the Eastern Hospital for the Insane is admirably described as follows, by the superintendent :

The medical superintendent appoints all subordinates, assigns them to duty, and reports his action at the next regular meeting of the board of trustees for confirmation. An applicant applies to the medical superintendent and is furnished with a form of application, which must be filled in his own handwriting. From the references furnished, *confidential* inquiries are made concerning the applicant's character, habits, and qualifications. General letters of recommendation or petitions are not considered. Personal interviews are requested and usually obtained. When a vacancy occurs, if it cannot be filled by a promotion, the applications are examined and the applicant appearing best qualified for the position is selected. This selection is made without regard to the time of filing the application and without any limitation whatever, except a preference for residents of the state. If, however, a non-resident has the highest qualifications, he is appointed.

A member of the board of trustees under no circumstances indorses an application for employment.

Promotions are made whenever practicable. It is always preferred to fill the higher positions from members of the service, and thereby recognize faithfulness and efficiency.

Nepotism and favoritism are forbidden.

The power of discharge belongs to and is exercised by the medical superintendent, and his action is reported to the board of trustees. From the action of the medical superintendent there is no appeal. Violation of regulations, use of intoxicants, immoral conduct, incompetency, and neglect of duty are causes for removal.

These replies doubtless represent fairly the conditions existing in the institutions of the state, though there may be some variation in the practical execution of the rules. We were personally informed by the assistant superintendent of one institution that political influence had "everything to do with appointments" to subordinate places. We can hardly believe that these words mean all that they appear to, but when the trustees and superintendents are not sincere believers in non-partisan management, they will, of course, fail to execute it in an ideal manner.

*Local sentiment on the subject.*—The sentiment in favor of non-partisan management of these institutions has undoubtedly advanced greatly in Indiana within the past decade. It is nothing short of remarkable. Those now in control of the state institutions are, in the main, in thorough sympathy with the movement. The effort of some political leaders to restore the old conditions met with vigorous protests two years ago, from so numerous and from such influential quarters that the effort was quickly abandoned. Dr. Jos. D. Rogers, superintendent of the Northern Indiana Hospital for Insane, who has been for nearly twenty years continuously connected with some one of the hospitals of the state, and who therefore has been the witness of the change that has occurred, writes:

The policy above referred to has very general indorsement in all classes of society, and the more influential party leaders uniformly express satisfaction in being exempt from the responsibility of partisan management of such institutions.

The *Indianapolis News* of September 6, 1897, in commenting on the rules adopted by the Institution for the Deaf to insure and promote the merit system, said: "In a word, the institute is conducted on purely business principles, without any relation whatever to politics. It has taken many years and many bitter experiences to bring the state institutions up to this high level. Ten years ago the partisan system was in full tide . . . . It will be impossible ever to revert to the old system . . . . The people, too, have got hold of the principle that these institutions should be managed for the sole benefit of the inmates . . . . It is a step that will not be retraced. The progress is both real and permanent."

The superintendent of the Eastern Hospital writes: "The local press and influential citizens, without regard to party, support the



non-partisan management of this hospital." And all the replies received from those connected with the state institutions agree in saying that the prevailing sentiment and influence now support the merit system. Yet it must be remembered that it was only by the most vigorous efforts on the part of the friends of the merit system that some of the leaders of the dominant party in the last legislature (1897) were dissuaded from taking a long backward step in this regard. This possibility still exists, and to ignore it is to incur a danger. The vigilance of the friends of non-partisan control cannot be relaxed.

The following suggestive statement by Mr. Alexander Johnson of the way the merit system should be administered is of value, as calling attention to a possible danger.

It is possible to carry out some details of the merit system in a way to make the management of an institution extremely difficult. For instance, when a board of complaint can exist in an institution, composed of *three subordinate employés*, to whom other subordinates, who may be discharged for incompetence, may make their complaint, and to whom the head of the department must give reasons which are satisfactory for discharging an insubordinate or incompetent official, it is evident that discipline cannot be maintained as it must be in an institution where large numbers of feeble and helpless inmates are cared for. I have been informed that such a board of complaint or supervision exists in the post-office department of this city. I can only say that it would be impossible to conduct an institution for feeble-minded, a hospital for the insane, or a state's prison upon any such basis. Nothing is more necessary than that the superintendent shall have the peremptory power of removal of any of his subordinates, although it is also necessary that the reasons for the exercise of such power shall be stated in writing to a board of trustees, or some other body which is superior to him.

Miss Mary T. Wilson, president of the Indiana State Conference of Charities, writes :

I believe I have seen more harm come from personal favoritism and nepotism during the years of my connection with public institutions than from political preferences. This phase of the matter might be considered with great profit. Nothing so destroys the discipline of an institution as these two causes. Politicians have put no more incompetent persons on our pay-rolls than have clergymen and other good citizens who push an applicant through sympathy or other sentimental reasons. The merit system, honestly and conscientiously carried out, is the best safeguard against political influence and the no less harmful one of personal favoritism.

Our conclusion must be that of one of the superintendents: "I

know no instance of the failure of a careful and painstaking management under the merit system."

*County and municipal charities and corrections.*—The conditions of management in the local charitable and correctional institutions are very different. The chief exception to the general rule of political management is the case of the orphans' homes, of which there are about forty in the state. Some of these are conducted by societies, some by church organizations, but most of them are owned and controlled by the counties. The secretary of the Board of State Charities says: "It seems that generally, even where the homes are owned by the counties, the matrons are not selected on account of political considerations."

Boards of children's guardians exist in at least two of the large cities of the state. They were evidently intended to be non-partisan, and have been so managed. Inaugurated largely through the efforts of Oscar McCulloch, it could hardly have been otherwise. From a report sent us by N. A. Hyde, president of the board of Marion county (Indianapolis), we take the following:

The board is appointed by the judge of the circuit court and reports to him. The board appoints the matron and assistants, who hold office while performing satisfactory service. There are no written rules of administration. Appointments are made solely on grounds of personal fitness. No influence of party nor favoritism is known in the administration. No trace of partisan spirit has ever appeared in the board.

In these cases the merit system may have been easier to apply, both because the officers are generally not voters, and because the boards are mainly under the control of women. In all other kinds of local public charities the election is along political lines. The 1,016 township trustees, who act as outdoor relief officers, are thus chosen. It is frequently charged that party advantage determines some of the relief. A prominent politician informs us that control of the office of trustee is looked upon by party leaders as being of the highest political importance. He suggested that a comparison of the relief granted in election and non-election years would show that politics is a large factor. There are no statistics as yet available over a series of years making the comparison possible. Over a third of a million dollars are annually distributed through the agency of the trustees for outdoor relief; nearly half as much additional is expended for this purpose by the county commissioners. Fortunately a number of these officials are men of high integrity. For men who fall below that standard the pressure of political influence to use the opportunities of the position for party advantage must be tremendous. The law of the state does not make the receipt of outdoor relief a bar to the suffrage, and the twenty thousand adult male paupers are thus in many ways a source of political corruption.

Every one of the ninety-two counties of the state has a poor-farm, or county asylum. The superintendent is, so far as our pretty extensive information indicates, always selected from the dominant party, that is, by the majority of the county commissioners. It is considered a part of the duties of the superintendent to see that the inmates vote for his party. There are nearly two thousand such voters in the state. In those counties where the political parties are of nearly equal strength the change of superintendents is frequent. Many county asylums have undoubtedly been very badly managed, but it is conceded that on the whole some improvement has been made in this respect. Some of the present incumbents have taken a most commendable interest in the work, both of the National Conference of Charities and Correction and of the Indiana State Conference of Charities. Vast room for improvement remains, however, in most of the counties, and the merit system in these institutions seems yet a long way off.

There are but few public hospitals in the state. The City Hospital at Indianapolis is the most prominent, and it is under political management and control.

With reference to county and municipal institutions of correction and restraint the tale is soon told. They are all under political management. The work of the Board of State Charities in visiting and inspecting them has had a helpful influence, but there are the usual and universal marks of political control. The complaints are not of political favoritism in the treatment of prisoners, though such cases may occur. The faults are frequent changes, inexperience, unfitness of attendants, general laxness. It is, perhaps, inevitable that small institutions, not justifying the employment of specialists, should continue to have many of the faults here found. At present, however, the difference is slight between the smaller and larger cities, in this regard.

We will conclude the consideration of the whole subject with the words of Mr. Alexander Johnson. He says in a letter to the committee :

I believe that without an enlightened and vigorous public sentiment the very best scheme will go astray. It is a commonplace that the stream cannot rise higher than its source, and I do not believe any adroit machinery will secure good and honest government for a nation of tricksters and thieves. Hence, I believe that every effort should be made to enlighten the public mind, and especially should faithful service of the state command public approval from the reformers.

#### THE NORTHWEST.

From the great Northwest no details of value have come. A witness from Nebraska testifies that civil-service reform has yet work to

do in those new lands. "The customs governing appointments, removals, and promotions in these state institutions are, unfortunately, under the principle that 'to the victors belong the spoils,' and not in accordance with the fitness and qualification of the party. When there is a change in the politics of the administration, there is a complete change in all these places of public trust." Another writes of state institutions: "The test for appointments is somewhat political. There is no competitive examination. It is thought best by those most interested in these institutions that they should be removed from political influences as far as possible."

#### THE PACIFIC COAST.

##### CALIFORNIA.

The only state on the Pacific coast for which our correspondence furnishes evidence is California.

Professor Carl C. Plehn expresses the judgment :

Almost all appointments in California outside of the university and the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Institution are made for political reasons. It is, however, not often that this method of appointment is so abused as to result in serious harm. . . . No local sentiment on the subject of appointments has ever been given expression to my knowledge during the last five years.

Another person in good position to know the facts speaks very strongly of the unfit appointments in several of the state institutions, and declares that the partisan politicians have prevented the organization of a state board of charities, lest it might uncover the abuses. "As for town and county jails, and lock-ups, they are very, very bad, and contrast unfavorably with those of eastern states."

A correspondent says of a city and county hospital :

Since the members of the board . . . owe their positions to one or the other of the political parties, they are expected to consult the wishes of the political managers in making all appointments. . . . In case a political appointee is flagrantly unfit for the position given him (which not unfrequently happens), he may be removed, and his place filled by an appointee chosen by the board with reference to his professional fitness and not his political influence. While the present board may have backbone enough to thus ignore the politicians, previous boards have not had such independence, and consequently the hospital was under the complete sway of the spoils-men. Disputes between the administration and impertinent, often ignorant, politicians seriously interfere with the discipline and effectiveness of the staff. The patients must suffer.

In a reform school for boys the radical and irrational changes seemed to destroy the contentment and order of the community. Ninety-five boys out of 365 escaped in less than a year. The present board is not necessarily inferior to the former, but the partisan interference has crippled their usefulness and undermined discipline.

The same correspondent cites evidence that in the asylum for the insane the attendants were assessed 3 per cent. of their salaries for election expenses.

The last legislature of California brought the hospitals for the insane under the merit system. In other state charitable institutions there is no scheme of examinations, though they are generally non-partisan in management.

The penitentiaries are non-partisan in their wardens and most of the subordinate officials; but still, I believe, there is no regular civil-service administration. The same wardens have been in charge, regardless of the politics of the state, for many years. The reformatories are somewhat partisan. The jails and houses of correction are, as far as I have observed, strictly partisan. The sentiment of intelligent and responsible people generally is that in all these institutions appointments should be made for merit only; but there has been no public expression, as far as I can recall, in regard to the city and county jails. It is a sad fact that they are generally considered as very proper and necessary spoils for the political victor.

#### THE SOUTH.

The following information may be taken to represent a very general condition of administration and the current of opinion favorable to civil-service reform.

#### KENTUCKY.

Few reports were received from Kentucky, but few were needed to answer the main inquiries. Political management appears to be the practically general rule. The penitentiary is under the direction of the Sinking Fund Commissioners, who are *ex officio* the governor, attorney-general, auditor, and treasurer. The wardens and deputy wardens are appointed by the governor; guards by the commissioners. For the Lunatic Asylum and the Feeble-Minded Institute the superintendents are appointed by the governor; employés and attendants by the superintendents, in conjunction with the board of commissioners. Schools for the blind, and deaf and dumb are officered by boards of directors, who are appointed by the governor. Evidently here the evil lies not in the method of appointment so much as in the custom of treating the institutions as political spoils.

The message of Governor William O. Bradley to the general assembly in 1898 compliments the condition of all the state institutions. A general reduction of their expenses took place in 1896, as compared with 1895. He states that they "are well officered, and are moving along harmoniously and successfully, the management comparing favorably with any period in the past" (for the first time the Republican party, that of the governor, is in control of the state). Further on in his message, however, the governor implies that under no management as yet have the administrations of these institutions been as efficient as they should be. He says :

The charitable and penal institutions of the state should be placed on a thoroughly non-partisan basis, and officers appointed on account of their especial fitness and experience. Such a system prevails in many states of the union, and in every instance has proven most beneficial. Charities should not be used to promote political ends.

No particular party is responsible for the prevalence of the rule in Kentucky, but each and all are to blame for it. By reason of this system, at the end of every four years, the successful candidates, desirous to reward their friends, turn out of office those who have acquired experience and substitute others to whom the duties are entirely novel. . . .

For years there has been no complaint in this state concerning the management of charitable and penal institutions. How could it be expected that these great interests should thrive as they deserve when inexperienced men are so frequently in control? If a change is to be effected, someone must inaugurate the movement; and, with the interest of the state far above party ties, I earnestly call your attention to this great wrong, and recommend its discontinuance.

He then suggests the appointment of three non partisan commissioners on the Board of Charities and Corrections—experienced men, to be selected, if necessary, from any state in the union—whose business it should be to look after the selection of officials and to care for the financial and other interests of the institutions.

Commenting further on the present *ex officio* political commissions directing the institutions, he says that their other duties are onerous—

and their proper discharge demands their whole time and attention. The consequence is that, in attempting to discharge the duties of the two positions, they will necessarily neglect the duties of one of them. Besides, they have so many friends to reward that, in the exuberance of their gratitude, infirmities of applicants are overlooked at the expense of the state.

We will add the following opinion from P. Caldwell, superintendent of the Industrial School of Reform at Louisville :

The sooner all of these public institutions are taken out of politics, the better. General fitness should alone be considered in selecting men or women for this work. The spoils system in state institutions should be relegated as a thing of the past. It will take time and hard knocks to change this villainous custom, but at least it is a service to get people to think about it.

#### TENNESSEE.

Political appointments are also the rule in Tennessee. Directors, trustees, etc., are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate. "Appointees are generally (we surmise that it is uniformly) of the same political faith. Politics enters into a great majority of appointments. A competent observer says that politics or favoritism, seldom merit or fitness for the place, determines the selections. There are no tests or examinations in competition. The sentiment of political leaders favors the existing conditions."

There is one hopeful feature in the situation. In 1895 a Board of State Charities was established, and is composed of representative men. Not more than four of the six shall be of one political party. The influence of such a board will be wholesome toward the formation of a sound sentiment on the subject of the management of the state institutions.

#### NORTH CAROLINA.

There is no civil-service system in the state. Very little influence has been exerted by politicians in partisan appointments heretofore, except as regards the offices of steward and engineer. A strong public opinion has insisted upon the retention of superintendents and assistant physicians who had shown themselves effective and trustworthy. Recently an attempt was made to displace occupants of offices in state institutions, but the court decided cases against the legislature.

In regard to the state penitentiary, the system of appointment as a reward for political services has gradually gained entire control, with the exception of the position of architect and warden.

County officers and employes under control of the commissioners are invariably elected for political reasons, but there is a reasonable attention paid to qualifications and general character.

The State Board of Public Charities reports defects in management to the governor, and if admonitions are not heeded by county

officials, they are handed over to the solicitor and judge of the district for prosecution. This promotes improvement.

It must be acknowledged that, while appreciating certain points of advantage in the system of civil service and appointment by competitive examination, public opinion favors appointment for political reasons. But when technical fitness is especially required, it is generally recognized, and position conceded upon grounds of qualification.

#### SOUTH CAROLINA.

Our correspondent believes that in case of poorhouses, state asylums, and prisons, "the best men obtainable are appointed to these positions. In this part of the South there is virtually only one political party, the Democratic; sometimes we are divided into different factions, but even then I do not think appointments are made in penal and charitable institutions solely upon factional grounds." He does not mention any civil-service rules or methods of selection and promotion.

#### VIRGINIA.

As a usual thing, appointments are confined to persons members of the political party in power, but personal merit and fitness for the place usually have the desired weight. There are no examinations and tests in competition. Local sentiment is not sufficiently crystallized to be of definite weight.

#### LOUISIANA.

Dr. Searcy said before the New Orleans Conference in 1897 :

By far the most objectionable and baneful influence that injures state care of the insane comes through politics. This is the same old hydra-headed specter that has impaired city and county care, only it is in a broader, higher field, where it has not quite the same advantage. "To the victors belong the spoils" is never so baneful a political maxim as where the spoiling affects as sacred institutions as insane hospitals.

In the southern states there has been considerable political constancy in the state governments for a number of years, or until quite recently. Whatever objection has been found to hospital management in this section, it has not had its origin in frequent political changes, and, as a rule, the stability of control has, that far, had a salutary effect.

In the past two or three years, in the state governments of some of the southern states, this baneful principle has shown itself. In one or two states clean sweeps of the insane hospitals have been made, along with everything else, for political reasons only, and the thing is partially accomplished, or threatened, in other states. This practice is growing and has a most ominous future.



This meeting could not exert a more salutary influence than in the direction of a protest against the plunder of such institutions for political purposes.

Dr. Searcy quotes the following sayings of General Brinkerhoff :

As a hospital flag on every battlefield of civilized warfare is an emblem of neutrality and a sacred guarantee of protection to sick or wounded men, so, and more so, in political warfare the asylums for our dependent and defective classes should be sacred from the attacks of contending parties.

Generally the appointment of the members of the boards of control of state hospitals for the insane, and other state beneficiary institutions, is made by the governor. Sometimes, if not often, he is influenced by previous political obligations, necessitated in his election, so that he is unduly constrained to appoint persons who are not acquainted with or interested in the duties of the place or are inclined to control such places, not for the good of the *patients*, but for selfish or political purposes.

#### CONCLUSION.

There is a very general conviction among superintendents that an examination is superfluous. A very capable manager of a boys' reform school in Pennsylvania writes :

Appointments are made on the ground of efficiency, not by written examination, but after personal interview and careful investigation of the antecedents of the applicants by those who are responsible for their conduct. No political or other influence seems to be exercised in this matter.

Another able superintendent (of Wisconsin) states that four of the five members of the board must be of the same political faith as the executive.

The board never experiences any trouble in finding competent men *of its own political faith (!)* to fill these positions.

These replies show how far our most intelligent men are from appreciating the elementary principles of a permanent and professional service.

Another says :

I do not agree with Hon. Philip Garrett in the idea of any fixed rule for appointing subordinates in the public service. I believe in selecting competent and conscientious superintendents, hold them accountable for results, and give them the helm. An excellent cook may not know the multiplication table, and I have one now who writes her name "X."

But this excellent gentleman proves in the very next sentence of his letter that his principle breaks down, and that to "give the super-

intendent the helm" is really to make him a slave of his political masters.

When leaving —— I appealed to the president of the board of trustees to disregard clamor and keep good people at work without regard to political convictions. I argued at some length about the duty involved; but the gentleman looked up after I had finished and said: "Mr. ——, I quite agree with all you have said. It is beautiful in theory, but the fact is, we Pops are hungry. I believe in the doctrine that 'to the victors belong the spoils,' and we will gather them as fast as possible."

In his further disclosures of experience in a western state, he shows that so long as a superintendent has the power to select subordinates without examination or legal rules of promotion, he at once is liable to attack from members of the board on behalf of personal or political friends. The preliminary free competitive examination is the only device ever invented to protect the responsible administrator from his friends and relations. It brings conduct under the reign of law and eliminates caprice and private interest.

It is apparent that the fundamental principles of the civil-service reform are but dimly apprehended even among honest and capable officials educated under the spoils system. The ideas which have become familiar as the alphabet in English and German administration seem to us foreign. This is entirely clear from the cloudy definitions given to the "merit system" by many upright officers who really imagine they have adopted and are living up to the most modern ideals of appointments.

C. R. HENDERSON.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.